



Grand Chute
experience better



POLICE DEPARTMENT

1900 W. Grand Chute Blvd, Grand Chute, WI 54913

PH. 920-832-1575 • FAX 920-832-1749

www.grandchute.net

To the Citizens of Grand Chute and Other Concerned Parties,

On May 31, 2020, the Grand Chute Police Department was notified through an anonymous tip of an allegation that a Grand Chute police officer was responsible for posting highly offensive racist and homophobic commentary on a social media platform. The tip included a link to a Facebook page created by the reporting person for the purpose of sharing the offensive posts. The posts were reviewed and a determination was made that the content was, in fact, highly offensive, as well as racist and homophobic in nature.

I was notified of the posts shortly after they were discovered. To say I was shocked by the content would be an understatement. Our organization was still reeling from the horrific images of the murder of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police officers only days earlier when we were forced to face the prospect that one of our own employees might harbor racist views. Such a notion was unfathomable and completely antithetical to our Code of Conduct and the values that guide our organization; empathy, respect, integrity, and courage. As a result, an internal investigation was immediately initiated.

In any investigation, whether criminal in nature or that which focuses on non-criminal misconduct, the ultimate goal is to determine the truth. We instantly recognized the significance of that goal in this case, as the trust we have worked so hard to build with our community was at stake. Furthermore, we knew this investigation would generate interest and garner public response unlike any we had completed previously. As such, the investigation had to be meticulous, and we could leave no stone unturned in our pursuit of the truth.

Unfortunately, our commitment to a comprehensive investigation led to a unique challenge due to the public manner in which the complaint was conveyed to us; that being through a public Facebook post. It meant interest in the matter would grow daily as more people discovered the allegations, as would the demand for answers. I acknowledge those answers have taken longer to share than we desired, and I accept full responsibility for that. There have been three primary factors that have influenced the timing of my decision to release of this information.

Given the anonymity requested by the complainant and the fact that the Facebook page created to share the information was also created in anonymity, our only means of communication was through private Facebook messaging. A challenge arose, however, when the person who shared the information with us via Facebook chose to stop responding to our private messages shortly after the initial contact. As such, we were unable to obtain additional, or clarifying, information.

The second factor relates to various time consuming aspects of the investigation. Critical to this investigation was a thorough review of the officer's performance as a member of the Grand Chute Police Department. This became imperative since the offending behavior actually occurred years before joining the department, while he was still in high school. One key element involved an in-depth review of the officer's arrest activity to evaluate whether it revealed any indication of racial bias. This process included a review of body camera and in-car video of nearly 50 arrests for the purpose of ascertaining whether race, or any other individual characteristic, influenced the officer's actions. Other important steps also served to prolong the investigation, as did I, every time I received a progress report and thought of additional investigative avenues to pursue.

Finally, we faced various statutory obligations regarding release of this information. These include restrictions regarding the release prior to arriving at a final disposition and the requirement to consider the reputational and privacy rights of the employee, in addition to his right to appeal my decision to release the information. I'm pleased to say the officer has informed me he believes it is in the best interest of the community to release the summary information of the investigation and has waived his right to appeal.

Following this statement is a summary of the investigative steps taken to date and the general findings associated with them. It is important to note this investigation has not concluded, and additional work is being done. This notwithstanding, the need to provide reassurance to the community cannot be overstated, and, as I mentioned earlier, is shared by the officer involved.

When the investigation is complete, we will provide a final disposition and summary of our findings.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Greg Peterson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Greg" and last name "Peterson" clearly legible.

Greg Peterson
Chief of Police
Grand Chute Police Department